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SUBJECT: LETTER FROM PRESIDENT SIRLEAF TO SECRETARY CLINTON ON COP 15

¶1. Following is the text of a letter from President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to Secretary Clinton on the Liberian President's views on climate change and gender, and on U.S. leadership on addressing climate change. The letter came under cover of a dipnote dated December 15 and received at U.S. Embassy Monrovia on December 16.

¶2. BEGIN TEXT

EJS/MOS/RL/1015/'09

December 14, 2009

Dear Secretary Clinton,

I am writing to you in recognition of the special ties that link my country to yours; the hopes I place in your work for fair, ambitious, and binding global climate deal and your longstanding commitment to gender equality around the world.

While the outcome at Copenhagen will affect Liberians, Americans and indeed all citizens of the world, those who are and will be most vulnerable to climate change are women and children in the poorest countries.

I have experienced firsthand the dignity and courage of women as agents and drivers for change in my own country. They played integral roles in promoting peace, advocating for reconciliation, and ending the war. My country and I are indebted to them. As such, I would like to share some key facts with you which I feel should be a critical input to the negotiations:

-- Climate change exacerbates gender inequalities. Of the approximately 500 million people at extreme risk of climate change-related displacements and political and social upheavals, over 75% are women and children from the poorest countries.

-- Increased vulnerability is predicted for millions of smallholder farmers in Africa, "70-80 percent of whom are women. As women are also largely responsible for water collection and often serve as the primary caretaker in household, their burden will increase significantly".

-- Women are more vulnerable to climate related displacement and conflict, representing the majority of climate displaced people. This vulnerability and inequality often relegates women to the worst paid, least regulated jobs and can place them at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

Allow me to also express appreciation for the US Administration's impressive efforts to keep negotiations as ambitious as possible. I admire the courage and political acumen in negotiating for a binding global deal in Copenhagen while respecting the authority of Congress to seal the final outcome.

In a world, where leaders have the responsibility to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable are heard, and no single nation can unilaterally avert the climate crisis, the US has a unique opportunity to step up its role to champion the climate cause for all-rich and poor, men and women alike.

Nation states are looking to the US for leadership. The US emphasis and prioritization of climate justice through a fair, biding and ambitious deal sends a powerful signal to the rest of the world and builds trust. This will allow everyone to go much further than they otherwise would, bringing home victory for all.

I thank you for our leadership in advancing the cause of the world's most vulnerable, and wish you and your team much success in Copenhagen in the coming days.

Sincerely,
/s/
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Cc: Ms. Huma Abedin, Senior Advisor to Secretary of State
Ms. Melanne Veveer, Ambassador at large for Global
Women's Issues

END TEXT

¶3. Post will forward original letter via registered pouch to AF/W,
reg. no. 8621298.

THOMAS-GREENFIELD